# Changing the Campaign Plan in Midstream: Deciding Whether to Cancel an Operation

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## ABSTRACT

CHANGING THE CAMPAIGN PLAN IN MIDSTREAM: DECIDING WHETHER TO CANCEL AN OPERATION by MAJ Grant D. Steffan, USA, 55 pages.

This monograph examines whether a planned operation in a campaign should be executed unchanged, modified, or canceled. A campaign is a progression of sequential or simultaneous operations designed to accomplish a strategic objective. A campaign plan organizes these operations, but it is not a rigid document. Instead, campaign planning should be flexible, and allow for changes during the execution of the campaign. Modern warfare is complex, and careless changes to the campaign plan can unravel the detailed planning that synchronizes the campaign. A commander considering modifying or canceling an operation must balance the benefits of a change with harmful consequences.

The monograph investigates these issues using the historical experience of Operation STALEMATE in the Pacific in World War II. This American operation seized Peleliu and Angaur Islands in the Palau Island Chain from the Japanese in September 1944. The operation is especially appropriate for this study because senior commanders considered modifying or canceling it before it began. The operation was modified; part of it was executed, and part of it was canceled. American operational planning was mature at this point in the war; experienced leaders formed and commanded the operation. The operation was joint, and it used forces from the Army, Navy, Army Air Force, and Marine Corps.

The monograph concludes that operations need review before execution. The commander must determine if the operation still contributes toward victory, and evaluate whether its modification or cancellation would significantly increase the risk of defeat. He should also consider the impact of changes on the tempo of the campaign. Modifying or canceling an operation could accelerate or slow tempo. He must make these determinations based on the end state of the campaign. An open ended campaign, without a defined end state, offers no basis for evaluating its component operations' contributions to the campaign. The commander can properly assess the operation only if it is part of a campaign planned in depth.

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## Introduction

"No plan of operations can look with any certainty beyond the first meeting with the major forces of the enemy . . ."[1] This statement by the great nineteenth century Prussian general, Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, asserts that campaign planning must have some flexibility. War is a dynamic in which friction will cause changes during execution. In some cases, changes in the situation will prompt commanders to consider changing the campaign plan by modifying or canceling a major operation. The commander must base a decision to change the campaign upon a careful assessment of the situation and an understanding of the purpose of its component operations.

A campaign is a progression of sequential or simultaneous operations designed to accomplish a strategic objective.[2] The campaign plan organizes operations, but it is not a rigid document. Instead, campaign planning is an ongoing process, both before and during execution of the campaign. A variety of changes in conditions might induce a change in the campaign plan. For example, losing or failing to win a major operation could force a drastic revision in subsequent operations. Unexpected enemy strength or weakness could also force a reassessment of planned operations. Commanders must recognize changes and determine if planned operations still contribute to the strategic objective.

Changing the campaign plan requires flexibility in the commander, his staff, and the forces under his command. Although changing conditions demand flexibility, modern warfare is complex; the detailed planning and logistic preparations needed for major

operations take time and effort. Careless changes to the campaign plan can unravel the detailed planning that synchronizes combat units and the many other units that support them. The competing requirements of flexibility and synchronization have challenged military leaders at least since Moltke's time. Moltke believed that the interaction between friendly and enemy forces would invalidate detailed long range plans. Yet, he also supervised the comprehensive logistic and railroad transportation planning necessary for Prussian mobilization. He knew that the Prussian mobilization plans were too complex and detailed to permit significant changes and noted that a mistake in mobilization might be impossible to correct throughout the campaign.[3] Obviously, tension exists between flexibility and the synchronization needed to conduct a major operation. A commander considering modifying or canceling an operation must balance the benefits of a change with harmful consequences.

Branches and sequels are a method to build flexibility into campaign plans. Branches are contingency plans for the current operation, while sequels are options for subsequent operations based on the results of the current operation. Branches and sequels give commanders the ability to react quickly to unforeseen situations, and thus they help aid the commander in retaining freedom of action.[4] In a campaign plan, however, branches and sequels for every eventuality are impossible. Subordinate headquarters cannot realistically prepare for dozens of alternate plans. Nonetheless, a branch for canceling the next operation in a campaign probably merits preparation in most situations. While branches and sequels can enhance flexibility, what

can a commander use to judge the impact on the campaign of modifying or canceling an operation?

The primary consideration for changing a campaign plan is the risk of defeat, because changes to the campaign will affect the chances of victory or defeat. Increased risk may offer greater rewards, but raises the chance of defeat. Commanders usually minimize risk consistent with mission accomplishment; however, they must always accept some degree of risk. A risk is a chance from which recovery is possible if the result is unfavorable, while a gamble, in distinction, is a chance from which an unfavorable outcome means disaster.

The line of operations is a concept that needs to be considered. Operational commanders choose a line of operations when they create their campaign plan. Cancelling a planned operation will change this line of operations, and modifying an operation might change it. The line of operations allows the commander to visualize the campaign because it describes the spatial alignment of the main combat forces in relation to the enemy. A line of operations extends from the operational base to the objective, is the route followed by the major portion of the combat forces, and is the line over which forces would retreat if necessary.[5]

Another useful operational concept is tempo, which means the pace of military action. The sequence of operations and pauses in a campaign sets tempo. Changing the sequence of operations can accelerate or slow the tempo. For example, shorter pauses in the action, or deletion of intermediate operations can accelerate tempo. Forces should operate at a tempo that gives the best advantage over the enemy. An agile force that can accelerate the tempo can

overwhelm the enemy's ability to react. Fast tempo increases the pressure on the enemy because it unbalances him and deprives him of freedom of action. If one side cannot cope with the pace of events, his opponent can maintain initiative and freedom of action. A weaker force may want to slow tempo to build strength and contest the initiative.[6]

A commander anticipates change during the execution of operations. He should determine what can change in the situation and then decide which signs would indicate these changes. The commander must stay alert to see these signs so that he can turn changes to his advantage. Excessive anticipation can expose the force to enemy deception, however, so the source of information requires careful consideration.[7]

An operational commander should consider synergy in the application of joint resources when contemplating changes to the campaign plan. Commanders should use the full advantage of available land, air, sea, space, and special operations forces. They use symmetrical operations such as land forces versus land forces and asymmetrical operations such as air forces versus land forces in combination to hit enemy vulnerabilities with friendly strength. The combination of joint forces can have an effect greater than the sum of its parts.[8] Just as changes to the campaign can harm synchronization, they have the potential to disrupt synergy. Synergy, however, may be the basis of change. For instance, if air power alone can neutralize the enemy in an objective, a planned joint air and land assault may be unnecessary.

Flexibility, risk, line of operations, tempo, anticipation, and synergy all appear to warrant consideration by commanders who must decide whether to make potential changes during the execution of a campaign. If these concepts are applied to a historical operation, will they illustrate decisions that actually occurred, and what insights are revealed? This monograph investigates considerations that indicate whether a planned operation should be executed, modified or canceled using the experience of a major American operation in the Pacific in World War II.

## Operation STALEMATE

The American operation to seize Peleliu and Angaur Islands in the Palau Island Chain from the Japanese in 1944 was code named Operation STALEMATE. The operation is ideal for this study because senior commanders considered modifying or canceling it before it began. The operation was modified; part of it was executed, and part of it was canceled. American operational planning was mature at this point in the war; experienced leaders formed and commanded the operation. The operation used forces from the Army, Navy, Army Air Force, and Marine Corps, and involved 250,000 personnel, 1600 aircraft, and 800 ships including 16 large aircraft carriers, 20 escort carriers, 14 battleships, 22 cruisers, and 136 destroyers.[9]

In 1944, Japan was on the defensive in the Pacific. Japan's stunning gains in 1941 and 1942 had left it overextended, and the industrial might of the United States put Japan in an increasingly difficult situation. Agreements with Great Britain gave the United

States strategic direction for the Pacific Ocean. This meant that the war in the Pacific was essentially an American show. Negotiation and compromise within American channels were necessary, however, because the Pacific included two major theater commands. General Douglas MacArthur was the commander in chief of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). His area of responsibility included Australia, New Guinea, Borneo, and the Philippines, along with adjoining ocean and lesser islands. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was the commander in chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas (POA), and was responsible for all the Pacific Ocean north and east of MacArthur's area except for coastal Latin American waters.[10] The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) exercised strategic oversight for both SWPA and POA.

Strategic and operational planning took place at three levels in the Pacific. The Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), composed of the American and British chiefs of staff, provided the broadest military strategic guidance. The CCS met in a series of conferences that set direction for the war. It was at the Quadrant Conference, held in Quebec in August 1943, that the American JCS presented a plan for a central Pacific campaign that concluded with the seizure of the Palaus.[11] The Joint War Plans Committee in Washington, DC conducted planning at the JCS level. For the Pacific, this committee developed campaign plans and coordinated major operations between the two Pacific theaters.[12] The SWPA and POA staffs conducted most operational level planning. Army officers dominated MacArthur's staff, while the POA staff initially had only Navy officers in positions of authority. Army objections caused Nimitz to create a truly joint

staff in September 1943; Army officers headed two of its four sections.[13]

Plans developed in 1943 created the framework for operations in 1944. These plans called for twin offensives by SWPA in New Guinea and by POA across the central Pacific (see Map 1). Both offensives aimed at recapture of the Philippines. The SWPA campaign initially oriented on the major Japanese base at Rabaul on New Britain Island. From June 1943 to March 1944, a series of operations in Northeast New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Cape Gloucester on New Britain, and the Admiralty Islands successfully isolated Rabaul. Subsequent operations, such as the landings at Hollandia, New Guinea in April 1944, isolated additional Japanese forces in New Guinea. By 31 July 1944, SWPA had secured Sansapor at the extreme western end of New Guinea, and was poised to close in on the Philippines.[14]

While SWPA was advancing in New Guinea, POA was seizing atolls and islands in the central Pacific. These operations began with Tarawa and Makin Atolls in the Gilbert Islands in November 1943, and continued with Kwajalein and Eniwetok Atolls in the Marshall Islands in January and February 1944. POA neutralized the Japanese base at Truk with carrier raids, and then moved on the Mariana Islands beginning in June. By 10 August 1944, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in the Marianas were all secure. Like MacArthur, Nimitz was prepared to move into the Philippines.[15]

The twin offensives toward the Philippines had made good progress by mid 1944. Some planners, including Admiral Ernest J. King, the Chief of Naval Operations, now wanted to bypass Luzon, the principal Philippine Island, and strike directly to Formosa.

MacArthur adamantly opposed suggestions to bypass Luzon.[16] The Luzon versus Formosa choice became a major strategic dispute. Nonetheless, American successes and Japanese weakness showed that the United States had the initiative in the Pacific throughout 1944. How did Operation STALEMATE fit into the central Pacific campaign?

The Palaus first appeared as an objective in JCS long range planning in July 1943.[17] After the CCS approved these plans at the Quadrant Conference, the Palaus remained an objective on the central Pacific's forecasted 1944 line of operations until late 1943. By the end of the year, the capabilities of the new long range B-29 bomber had convinced key members of the JCS to reassess the projected line of operations. The Mariana Islands were close enough for B-29 bombers to strike the Japanese home islands, and thus seemed a more important objective than the Palaus. The JCS went to the Sextant Conference in Cairo in November 1943 with a proposal to seize the Marianas. After negotiation at the conference, the CCS approved dual advances by SWPA and POA in the Pacific to converge on the Formosa, Luzon, China coast area. The Marianas were the final 1944 objective for the central Pacific drive; the Palaus were deleted.[18]

POA and SWPA planners were also considering the Palau Islands. The Palaus were an objective in POA Campaign Plan GRANITE, dated 13 January 1944.[19] On 28 and 29 January 1944, SWPA and POA planners met at Pearl Harbor to coordinate future campaign plans. These operational planners were unimpressed by the potential of strategic bombing and thus discounted the importance of the Marianas. They agreed that the Philippines were a vital objective. Before the start of operations in the Philippines, POA would need to

seize the Palaus to protect the SWPA eastern flank. They also agreed that an assault on Truk, Japan's biggest base in the central Pacific, would be difficult. POA should instead neutralize and bypass Truk. Seizing the Palaus would contribute to Truk's neutralization and isolation.[20]

Plans at the operational level had substantial differences with strategic plans. After the January conference in Hawaii, discussions about future operations continued in Washington, DC and at both Pacific theater headquarters. SWPA and POA submitted their final proposals in March pending a definitive JCS directive. Both proposals included the Palaus. The SWPA proposal wanted the Palaus seized to secure the eastern flank of landings on Mindanao in the Philippines. SWPA offered bombers operating from New Guinea to support an operation in the Palaus. The POA proposal focused on neutralization and isolation of Truk by seizing the Marianas and Palaus.[21]

The JCS considered the theater proposals and issued a directive to POA and SWPA on 12 March 1944 that set the lines of operations for the rest of the year. This directive included orders for POA to occupy the Palaus with a target date of 15 September, to control the eastern approaches to the Philippines and Formosa, and to establish air and fleet bases to support operations against Mindanao, Formosa, and China. The directive included orders for SWPA to develop air bases at Hollandia in New Guinea that would not only support further advances in New Guinea, but that would support attacks on the Palaus.[22] Compared to the plan approved at the Sextant Conference only three months before, the directive accelerated the tempo of Pacific operations. By bypassing Truk, the central Pacific offensive would

take the Marianas in the summer, and seize the Palaus in September. The directive was vague, however, about the final objective of the twin campaig . It only pointed to a triangle of the Philippines, Formosa, and China. The JCS directive included the Palaus as both theaters' proposals had requested, but how appropriate was this objective?

The theater headquarters had little information concerning the Palaus in early 1944. The islands had belonged to Spain for centuries when Germany bought them in 1899, but Spain had done little with the islands. Germany had only begun to exploit them by the start of World War I; Japan snatched the islands upon entering the war against Germany. After the war, Japan administered the islands under a League of Nations mandate. Like Japan's other mandates, the Palaus were essentially closed to foreigners, so available intelligence was meager.[23]

For campaign planners, the Palaus' most important attribute was their location at the extreme western end of the Caroline Islands; they are the closest landfall east of the Philippines. Composed of several major islands, the island group extends about 90 miles north to south. Angaur is the southernmost island in the group, and Peleliu lies just to the north of Angaur. Further north is the Palaus' biggest town, on Koror Island, and largest island, Babelthuap. Babelthuap, Peleliu, and Angaur all appeared to have good air base potential, and the Japanese had already build airstrips on Babelthuap and Peleliu. Reefs surround most of the island group, and both the lagoon near Koror and the Kossol Passage north of Babelthuap seemed suitable to be fleet anchorages.

The JCS directive implied that seizure of the Palaus would help isolate and neutralize Truk. American seizure of the Marianas would isolate Truk from the north, while seizure of the Palaus would cut off Truk from the west. American control of Palaus would help isolate Truk, but neutralization was another matter. The B-24 heavy bomber could travel 2,100 miles round trip with a good bomb load.[24] Unfortunately, this range was insufficient to reach Truk from the Palaus, and the B-24 was the longest range bomber available to POA. Land based aircraft in the Palaus could therefore make no direct contribution to the neutralization of Truk.

The JCS task to control the eastern approaches to the Philippines implied that POA must eliminate Japanese threats to the Philippines from the Palaus. This meant land based aircraft. Ground forces in the Palaus could have no impact on the Philippines, and the Japanese fleet could not reasonably operate from the Palaus once Truk became untenable. Could Japanese aircraft effectively strike the Philippines from the Palaus? Intelligence estimates developed for the Palaus landings suggest not. POA intelligence showed little concern about enemy interference from the Philippines because the Japanese did not have sufficient numbers of long range aircraft to cross the 550 miles from the Philippines to the Palaus and return.[25] If the Palaus were too far from the Philippines for the Japanese to threaten, how could there be a threat in reverse, from the Palaus to the Philippines? It does not appear that the Japanese could have mounted a credible threat to MacArthur's flank in the Philippines from the Palau Islands.

The JCS also directed POA to develop air and fleet bases to support operations in the Philippines. Planners believed that the

Palaus could serve as a base for aircraft operating in support of operations in the Philippines (see Map 2). The aircraft available to SWPA and POA in 1944 included B-24 Liberator heavy bombers, B-25 Mitchell medium bombers, P-47 Thunderbolt fighters, and P-38 Lightning fighters.[26] Most of the Philippines were within range of B-24 bombers operating out of the Palaus, but only Mindanao would be within range of the B-25 bombers. Even using belly drop tanks, all the Philippines were beyond the range of the available fighters.[27] Since the Palaus are closer to the Philippines than New Guinea, a base in the Palaus could improve bomber support for operations in the Philippines, but it could not provide fighter support to the Philippines.

POA actions implementing the JCS directive began in late March 1944. Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's fast carrier force raided Koror, Babelthuap, and Peleliu on 30 and 31 March to cover the Hollandia landings on New Guinea. This raid destroyed numerous enemy aircraft, badly damaged the airstrips on Babelthuap and Peleliu, and sunk or damaged several ships anchored off Koror. Although Mitscher knew the raid was successful, he did not know the extent of the damage. Japanese air facilities were devastated, and the raid opened the way for subsequent air attacks. Japanese air power in the islands never really recovered.[28]

Using the 12 March directive, POA formed its campaign plan for the rest 1944. Nimitz released a joint staff study on 10 May for Operation STALEMATE. The operation's objectives were the entire Palau Island chain. The study specified the operation's chain of command, force allocations, scheme of maneuver, and logistic support plan. It designated Admiral William F. Halsey to command the

operation, and it prompted detailed planning by subordinate headquarters.[29]

POA followed up its staff study with a warning order to subordinate units at the end of the month. The warning order assigned responsibility for Babelthuap to the 7th and 77th Infantry Divisions under XXIV Corps. The III Amphibious Corps would have the 1st Marine Division to take Peleliu and the 81st Infantry Division to take Angaur. A Joint Expeditionary Force under Vice Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson had overall responsibility for landing operations of both corps. Wilkinson would have the 27th Infantry Division in reserve, and he would report to the Third Fleet Commander, Admiral Halsey.[30]

Other operations caused planning conflicts for two key leaders in Operation STALEMATE. Halsey was still the commander of a major geographical subdivision of POA, the South Pacific Area. Major General Roy S. Geiger, commander of the III Amphibious Corps, was busy with his corps staff planning for the invasion of Guam.[31] Geiger had been in Pearl Harbor in April, and Nimitz warned him about the upcoming Palaus operation. Geiger formed a special cell from the corps staff to begin planning for the Palaus, and he detached it to Pearl Harbor to continue planning while the Guam operation occurred. POA augmented the planning cell with Army and Navy planners, and named it X-Ray Provisional Amphibious Corps. POA then placed X-Ray under the command of Major General Julian C. Smith, and it assumed responsibility for planning ground operations on Peleliu and Angaur.[32]

As Halsey was finishing his duties in the South Pacific Area, he thought about Operation STALEMATE. He was the overall commander for the operation, yet he had serious reservations about it. He believed that the long Japanese possession and preparation of the Palaus would make ground assaults tough and costly. He was skeptical about the value of the airfields and anchorage in the Palaus, and he judged that they would not be worth their cost in casualties. Instead, Halsey thought that carrier aircraft could neutralize the Palaus.[33] Additionally, Halsey believed that carrier aircraft could cover landings in the Philippines without assistance from land based aircraft. He had observed the experience in the central Pacific since Tarawa, where groups of carriers had successfully pushed into enemy territory without land based air cover.[34]

While planning continued, a battle occurred that should have cast further doubt on Operation STALEMATE. Japan attempted to counter the initial landings in the Marianas using their fast carriers. The resulting Battle of the Philippine Sea was a decisive victory for the Americans. From 19 to 21 June, the Japanese lost 480 planes and almost as many pilots, along with their three largest carriers. They ended the fight with only 35 serviceable carrier airplanes; the Japanese carrier air groups had been annihilated.[35] After the battle, the Japanese carrier air groups never recovered, so the Japanese could not have threatened MacArthur's eastern flank in the Philippines with carrier based aircraft. The battle reduced the risk of bypassing the Palaus.

Although this battle did not prompt a reassessment of Operation STALEMATE, other changes in June and July produced a major

modification in the operation. The biggest change was in the picture of the enemy in the Palaus. Revised intelligence estimates increased the Japanese strength in the Palaus from 9,000 to 40,000.[36] This made Babelthuap look difficult even for two divisions. Also, POA staff engineers were less certain that Babelthuap's terrain was suitable for bomber air bases. Finally, the friendly situation had also changed. The Marianas operations were taking longer than expected, and some of the units slated for STALEMATE were still fighting there. The 27th Division landed on Saipan, and the 77th Division was waiting for the delayed landings on Guam.[37]

Nimitz reexamined his line of operations based on these changes in the enemy and friendly situation. Babelthuap no longer seemed like a good objective, but Nimitz wanted it neutralized. The potential airfields on Peleliu and Angaur seemed to provide the means to keep Japanese airfields in the rest of the Palaus out of action. Naval and air power could keep the rest of the Japanese Palau garrison from conducting counter landings against American forces on Peleliu and Angaur. A synergistic application of joint forces seemed wiser than landing on every Palau Island. Two new targets emerged to replace Babelthuap. Yap Island had an established Japanese air base; this base could replace the base on Babelthuap. Ulithi Atoll appeared ideal for a fleet base. It had a harbor that appeared very large, the Japanese had already built a seaplane base there, and some of the atoll's islands appeared big enough for landing strips. The operation was still two months away; Nimitz and POA had the flexibility to modify the operation.

Nimitz issued a warning order for Operation STALEMATE II on 7 July and the operations order on 21 July. It directed Halsey to occupy a line from Ulithi to the Palaus, to destroy or contain enemy forces threatening the operation, to protect sea and air communications in the western Pacific, and to provide carrier air support to concurrent SWPA operations. The operation had two phases. Phase 1 employed the III Amphibious Corps with the 1st Marine Division and 81st Infantry Division to seize Peleliu and Angaur with landings beginning on 15 September. Phase 2 employed the XXIV Corps with the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions to seize Yap and Ulithi beginning on 5 October. The 77th Infantry Division and 5th Marine Division formed the reserve for the operation. Wilkinson remained the commander of the Joint Expeditionary Force. As the overall commander, Halsey was in charge of the entire Third Fleet which included Wilkinson's expeditionary force, Mitscher's carrier task force, and other major naval task forces and task groups.[38]

As the tactical plans developed for the operation, additional intelligence gave a better view of the enemy and terrain. The enemy situation was clarified with the fortunate capture of enemy documents on Saipan in July. The forces in the Palaus had been under the command of the Japanese army on Saipan, and army headquarters documents gave very detailed and accurate strength accounts. For example, Peleliu was projected to have between 10,320 and 10,700 men. This is very close to post war estimates of just over 10,000. Angaur was projected to have 1,400 men while the Yap garrison was put between 8,000 and 10,000 men.[39] A calculation of the correlation of forces should have caused concern about Peleliu since only one

Marine division would land on that island. Since every member of the Japanese garrison would probably fight, the Marines would have only a 1:1 infantry strength ratio with the Japanese. This is a low ratio for an attack, especially during an opposed amphibious assault.[40]

Terrain analysis and estimates of enemy dispositions depended on photography. Aerial photographs taken from vertical and oblique angles, along with profile photographs taken from submarines, allowed POA to produce 1:20,000 scale maps. The maps were usable, but contained numerous errors. Unfortunately, the photographs did not identify many Japanese positions due to vegetation and Japanese expertise with camouflage. Experience in the Pacific, however, clearly indicated that the Japanese would not fail to heavily fortify their defensive positions.[41]

As preparations continued, Nimitz made final adjustments to the operation's command structure. Geiger finished his duties in Guam and took command of X-Ray on 15 August; at this time X-Ray became III Amphibious Corps. Smith moved up to become Commander, Expeditionary Troops, and had command of the ground forces from both corps. Unfortunately, the planning staff stayed with Geiger, and Smith thus had little ability to influence the conduct of the operation.[42]

One impact of the changes at corps level was to push planning responsibility down to the divisions. This was difficult for the 1st Marine Division. The division was a veteran of the Pacific, but its members needed recuperation. Unfortunately, its reconstitution and training site was the rat infested island of Pavuvu near Guadalcanal. The division staff had to deal with the challenges of daily living while

it planned for Peleliu. Some problems could not be resolved. For example, a shortage of shipping forced the division to leave behind 16 of its 30 tanks; they were sorely missed on Peleliu.[43] The supply planners were very perceptive. The corps operations order required 5 units of supply of demolitions and flame thrower filler. Each unit of supply was enough ammunition for one day of heavy fighting based on POA experience. The division instead took 15 units of supply of these items, and thus tripled the ammunition needed for reducing enemy fortifications in rough terrain. Some senior members of the division staff obviously expected tough fighting.[44]

The commander of 1st Marine Division, Major General William H. Rupertus, had different views. In a rehearsal critique to a large group of Marines four days before the division departed for Peleliu, Rupertus predicted that the battle would be like Tarawa. It would be tough fighting, but it would be over in three days.[45] He distributed sealed envelopes for troop commanders and press correspondents with instructions to read the enclosed letter on 14 September. His letter predicted a short, tough fight and claimed Peleliu would be secure in four days.[46] While division intelligence could show a marginal correlation of forces and division supply prepared for extensive fortification reduction, the division commander was unusually optimistic. He did not raise concerns about the operation to higher headquarters; if he had done so, Nimitz might have reconsidered the operation.

Accompanying the Marines in Phase 1 was the untested 81st Infantry Division. The STALEMATE II warning order called for one infantry regiment to take Angaur while the rest of the division

remained as the corps reserve to back up the Marines. In light of the Saipan documents, the operations order committed the bulk of the division to land on Angaur, leaving only one regiment in corps reserve. Also, the division did preliminary planning to seize Ulithi with one regiment during Phase 2. XXIV Corps assumed this task in late August, but subsequent events would prove that this planning by the 81st Division was fortunate.[47]

While Nimitz' subordinates were making their final preparations for STALEMATE, the subsequent line of operations remained vague. In June, planners at the JCS had sent inquiries to the Pacific theaters that asked whether the Philippines could be bypassed entirely. Both Nimitz and MacArthur rejected these ideas; MacArthur insisted that the Philippines should not be bypassed. By July, the JCS and the theaters had reached consensus that the two theaters' lines of operations should converge on Mindanao in the southern Philippines, and then advance toward either Luzon or Formosa. Unfortunately, the choice of Luzon or Formosa was completely unresolved. The debate was the central discussion when President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Hawaii on 26 and 27 July to meet with MacArthur and Nimitz. MacArthur eloquently championed the choice of Luzon; he convinced both Roosevelt and Nimitz that Luzon was the best choice.[48] The JCS had not accompanied the President, however, and Admiral King still favored Formosa. Roosevelt was not willing to dictate strategy to the JCS, so the debate continued until October.

The failure of the JCS to pick a line of operations harmed Nimitz' ability to assess Operation STALEMATE. In itself, the

operation did not achieve any strategic objectives; it only facilitated subsequent operations that could lead to Japan's defeat. Since the JCS had not selected any objectives beyond Mindanao, Nimitz could not effectively assess the operation's importance. Occupation of the Palaus could contribute to operations in Mindanao by providing bases for medium and heavy bombers. Such bases would be less useful for operations in Leyte since that island would be at the limit of medium bomber range. The bases would have even less utility for operations in the rest of the Philippines since even heavy bombers would need to operate at the limits of their range. STALEMATE could facilitate an operation in Mindanao, but would have less impact at subsequent locations. Of the potential end points, Luzon was within bomber range of the Palaus, but Formosa was well out of range. Thus, possession of the Palaus could directly contribute to operations on Luzon, but could have no direct influence on Formosa. Nimitz was forced to determine the value of STALEMATE while guessing the direction of the future line of operations.

SWPA coordinated its upcoming operations to coincide with Operation STALEMATE. To advance on Mindanao, MacArthur needed to establish air cover on his western flank against Japanese aircraft operating from Ambon, Ceram, and Celebes. Also, SWPA wanted to continue its proven practice of short advances. Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, commander of Army Air Forces in SWPA, believed that landings should stay inside fighter escorted bomber range. In these circumstances, Morotai Island was the best choice for the next advance. The landings on Morotai were scheduled for 15 September to hit simultaneously with landings on Peleliu.

Subsequent operations were landings on the Talaud Islands on 15 October and at Sarangani Bay on Mindanao on 15 November. MacArthur envisioned continuing to Leyte in December, and invading Luzon in 1945.[49]

MacArthur believed that seizure of the Palaus was necessary before his entry into the Philippines. Planners at the JCS sent an inquiry to SWPA on 27 July that proposed dropping the Palaus, Talauds, and Mindanao landings; retaining the landings on Yap and Ulithi; and accelerating a landing on Leyte. The proposal's intent was to increase the tempo of operations against Japan. MacArthur strongly objected to all the suggestions in a 3 August reply. The War Department then sent planners to SWPA headquarters to discuss preliminaries to the Philippines. MacArthur stuck to his concept of operations and insisted that seizure of the Palaus was vital to protect his operations in the Philippines.[50]

MacArthur's views probably affected Nimitz' evaluation of Operation STALEMATE. The division of the Pacific into two theaters had caused some rivalry between the two commands. In this case, however, cooperation was an impediment to flexibility. Nimitz was committed to the operation to protect the adjacent theater's flank, and MacArthur insisted that this protection was vital. In these circumstances, Nimitz could not unilaterally decide that the operation was unnecessary and cancel it. Any recommendation to modify or cancel the operation would need JCS approval.

After the August discussions at SWPA Headquarters, the JCS finally committed to a line of operations beyond Mindanao. A JCS directive to SWPA and POA on 8 September directed SWPA to seize

Leyte with a target date of 20 December.[51] The JCS sent this directive a few days before they departed for Quebec to attend the Octagon Conference. The impending conference probably spurred their decision on the final objective in the Pacific for 1944.

Execution of preliminary land based air strikes on the Palaus began in June when SWPA's Fifth Air Force bombers flew a few harassment missions from Hollandia and Wadke Island. Heavy preparatory bombing began in August after SWPA moved the necessary air units to forward New Guinea air bases such as Noemfoor Island. SWPA agreed to bomb airfields, fixed facilities, and shipping in the Palaus, while the POA's Seventh Air Force hit Truk, Yap, and Ulithi with bombers flying from the Marianas.[52]

SWPA bombers belonging to the XIII Bomber Command conducted nightly raids on the Palaus from 8 to 28 August, and again from 7 to 14 September. Other bomber units flew daytime missions from 25 August to 5 September. This continuous bombing gave no respite to the Japanese in the Palaus. Concurrently, SWPA bombers attacked Mindanao and Celebes to prepare for the Morotai landings.[53] SWPA used photographic reconnaissance to assess the effectiveness of the bombing. By 5 September, photographs showed that all the Palaus' airstrips had numerous craters and were unusable. Photographs revealed only 12 fighters, 12 float planes, and 3 observation aircraft that appeared serviceable.[54] The March carrier raid and the summer's land based bombing had effectively neutralized Japanese air power in the Palaus. Air power alone had effectively protected MacArthur's flank without the use of ground forces. The

symmetrical use of air power against air power had successfully attacked Japanese weakness with American strength.

Admiral Halsey took command of Third Fleet on 26 August 1944 by taking charge of all ships in the central Pacific. Nimitz had devised an unorthodox way to accommodate his two senior subordinates. Halsey's success in the south Pacific had left him without a significant job, yet Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance had performed well as the fleet commander in the central Pacific. Nimitz' solution was a two staff system; the fleet was Fifth Fleet when Spruance and his staff were in charge, and it was Third Fleet when Halsey and his staff took over. This system expedited planning and accelerated operations because each commander and staff could focus on one operation while the alternate commander and staff planned the following operation. Additionally, this system served as an excellent deception measure against the Japanese.[55]

Halsey directed Mitscher's Task Force 38 to begin the series of carrier strikes that would precede the Palaus and Morotai landings. Mitscher began with a raid on the Bonin and Volcano Islands from 31 August to 2 September. This raid damaged facilities and destroyed an estimated 54 Japanese airplanes. The next target was the Palaus, which Task Force 38 attacked from 6 to 8 September. Halsey found that previous bombing had already destroyed most of the installations, so the carrier aircraft finished off any grounded aircraft that looked operable. The next target was Mindanao from 9 to 10 September. After destroying an estimated 58 airplanes, Halsey could not find any more worthwhile targets. He changed plans and shifted the carriers north to Leyte and Samar Islands. From 12 to 14 September, the task

force destroyed an estimated 300 Japanese aircraft while incurring few losses.[56] The carrier strikes had great success in destroying enemy installations and large numbers of aircraft. Also, the strikes were a deception measure. By hitting many places, the Japanese could not know where the Americans would land.[57]

When Halsey conducted the carriers strikes, he was alert for opportunities. In particular, he was looking for signs that indicated that the enemy was weaker than anticipated. He had learned in the south Pacific campaign to look for indicators of enemy weakness and to be ready to exploit this weakness.[58] Halsey remained skeptical of STALEMATE and he was ready to recommend changes to the operation if the enemy situation permitted. He revealed this when he visited the commander of XXIV Corps, Major General John R. Hodge, in late August. In an informal conversation, they agreed that Yap was not important. Halsey told Hodge that if a better objective appeared, Yap would be bypassed.[59]

In the Philippines, Halsey found the weakness that he was seeking. The Japanese did not respond to the carriers' attacks, and enemy installations on Leyte seemed sparse. An American pilot who bailed out over Leyte was rescued by Filipino guerrillas and returned to the fleet. Halsey personally interviewed the pilot and got the impression that the enemy had virtually abandoned Leyte. Halsey pondered the situation to decide whether the new information validated his intuition about the pending operation. Halsey decided that it did confirm Japanese weakness; however, his intelligence picture was wrong. The Japanese were holding back their aircraft to

respond to a landing in the Philippines, and Japanese ground forces were formidable. Leyte was simply not wide open for invasion.[60]

Halsey may have used several considerations to analyze the situation. One consideration was tempo. Halsey believed that Japanese weakness indicated that accelerating the tempo was the proper course of action. This would keep the Japanese off balance and save thousands of American lives. He thought that the planned operations were too slow and conservative. A bold leap forward seemed not only possible, but would dislocate the Japanese, while leaving behind strongholds that had become irrelevant. Another consideration was risk. Halsey knew that assaults on the Palaus, Yap, and Mindanao would produce significant casualties, while a direct jump to Leyte was a calculated risk offering more rewards with significantly fewer losses. The same enemy conditions that permitted an accelerated tempo prevented the enemy in bypassed locations from influencing events. Halsey may also have noted the synergistic application of combat power. The carrier strikes revealed that SWPA's Fifth Air Force had already badly damaged the enemy in the Palaus and Mindanao. This indicated that long range bombers could continue to effectively neutralize these targets. For the Leyte operation, Halsey believed Task Force 38 could provide air cover until landing forces established airfields ashore. Ultimately, Halsey's analysis indicated that a direct advance to Leyte was appropriate; all intermediate operations should be canceled.[61]

About noon on 13 September, Halsey decided to send a striking message to Nimitz. It requested canceling Operation STALEMATE except for Ulithi, and suggested canceling the SWPA landings

preceding Leyte. This meant cancellation of operations in the Palaus, Yap, Morotai, the Talauds, and Mindanao. The message also recommended accelerating the invasion of Leyte to the earliest practical time, and putting the forces freed from the canceled operations immediately at MacArthur's disposal for use on Leyte.[62]

Nimitz considered Halsey's message immediately. He agreed with Halsey's recommendations about Yap, but he did not agree about the Palaus. Nimitz had several concerns. Timing was the biggest problem; the Peleliu landings were less than 48 hours away. Nimitz believed that Phase 1 of STALEMATE was already too far along to cancel. He also held that seizure of the Palaus was necessary to complete the isolation of Truk. Bypassing Truk had involved some risk; bypassing all the Carolines would increase that risk. Finally, Nimitz thought the Palaus airfields and the anchorage in Kossol Passage would be valuable to support operations in Leyte. Since the JCS would need to make a final decision, Nimitz forwarded Halsey's recommendation with his endorsement to everything except the 15 September landings. He instructed Halsey to proceed with Phase 1 of the operation while the JCS considered the remainder of the recommendation.[63]

Nimitz sent an information copy of his message to SWPA, and the JCS quickly asked SWPA for their views on the recommendation. At that time MacArthur was unavailable because he was on a cruiser off Morotai, and the ship was under radio listening silence. The SWPA chief of staff, Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, thought that the matter was too urgent to wait for MacArthur's return from Morotai, so he decided to answer in MacArthur's name. When

MacArthur was informed later, he fully agreed with Sutherland's decision.[64] The SWPA staff considered the impact of Halsey's recommendations on their campaign. The Morotai operation had already been launched; it was beyond cancellation. The staff agreed that the Talauds and Mindanao operations were unnecessary, and that accelerating the tempo was appropriate. The staff had three reservations. First, Kenney believed that the Leyte operations would need air cover from carriers until landing forces built airfields on Leyte. Under the new line of operations, Leyte would be well outside land based fighter range. Second, SWPA intelligence disputed Halsey's assessment of enemy strength on Leyte. They correctly estimated that Japanese strength there was significant. Finally, Sutherland wanted XXIV Corps transferred to SWPA at once. On 15 September, Sutherland dispatched the SWPA response to the JCS. SWPA agreed to the proposals, contingent on the transfer of XXIV Corps. POA monitored the message, and Nimitz immediately sent a message to JCS that agreed to transfer XXIV Corps to SWPA.[65]

The JCS received SWPA's message and POA's agreement in Quebec during the Octagon Conference. The message crossed the international date line and arrived in Quebec on the evening of 14 September where the JCS had just begun a formal dinner hosted by the Canadian Chiefs of Staff. The JCS excused themselves and quickly conferred; they sent their response to SWPA and POA in less than two hours.[66] The JCS directive canceled Phase 2 of Operation STALEMATE and transferred XXIV Corps to SWPA for use on Leyte. It instructed POA to send shipping used in the Palaus to SWPA ports when released, and directed fire support ships and escort carriers to

support the Leyte operation when done in the Palaus. It also instructed POA to seize Ulithi for use as an advanced fleet base. The directive did not settle the Formosa versus Luzon question; the JCS had selected no objectives beyond Leyte by the conclusion of the Octagon Conference.[67]

Upon receipt of the directive, Nimitz immediately transferred XXIV Corps to SWPA. The quick transfer showed good flexibility in POA and its desire to cooperate with SWPA. Hodge and his staff quickly flew to SWPA Headquarters. The corps' two divisions had already embarked on ships in Pearl Harbor and were ready for the landings on Yap. The slower Landing Ships, Tank (LST) had departed on 11 September, while the faster transports were scheduled to leave on 15 September. The division commanders got their new mission right before the transports steamed from Hawaii, and informed their divisions about the new mission about two hours out from Pearl Harbor.[68]

Halsey's recommendation had been examined and coordinated by two theater headquarters and the JCS in less than 48 hours. In that short time, both Pacific campaigns were altered by modifying and canceling operations. Nonetheless, even if the JCS had wanted to cancel Morotai and the Palaus, it was too late. Marines were already ashore on Peleliu when the JCS sent its directive.

When Halsey made his recommendation to Nimitz, the Peleliu and Angaur landing forces were en route to the Palaus. The slow moving transports left Guadalcanal on 4 September for the long voyage to the Palaus, while the faster transport groups departed on 8 September. Land based aircraft flying from New Guinea and escort

carriers accompanying the convoys provided air cover. Nine submarines also screened the transports. The fast and slow transports rendezvoused off Peleliu on 15 September.[69]

A three day naval bombardment of Peleliu began on 12 September. Unfortunately, the bombardment was not very effective. Aerial photography had identified few specific Japanese positions, and the gunfire was effective only against known targets. Area fire wiped out concealing vegetation, but it had little effect on Japanese fortifications. Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, the commander of the fire support group, fired on all identified targets and then sent a message stating that he had run out of targets. This message caused him considerable embarrassment when the Marines landed amid heavy Japanese resistance. The bombardment also suffered from a lack of ammunition. The lengthy bombardment of Guam had used so much naval gun ammunition that stocks were insufficiently replenished by 15 September. Another trouble with the bombardment was its relatively short duration. Even if more ammunition had been available, tactical commanders could only shoot three days of preparatory fire because the landings had to occur on 15 September to coincide with the Morotai landings. The proper way to conduct preparatory fires on a fortified defensive position had been a problem at least since World War I. Generally, a lengthy bombardment alerted the defender of an impending attack, and allowed him to adjust his forces to repel the assault. In the central Pacific in 1944, however, the Japanese were unable to adjust. American control of the sea prevented them from moving reinforcements to threatened islands. In these circumstances, longer preparatory fires were better. The

shortage of ammunition should have caused an assessment of whether the operation was logistically supportable.[70]

The Navy prepared for the landings with a variety of other forces. Mitscher detached one group of fast carriers from Task Force 38 to join Wilkinson's escort carriers in bombing the Palaus. Carrier aircraft bombed Peleliu and Angaur from 10 through 14 September. Mine sweepers cleared 175 mines and marked cleared lanes to the landing beaches. Underwater demolition teams landed on the reef off Peleliu to open lanes for landing craft to get to the beaches.[71]

The 1st Marine Division landed with its three regiments abreast on the morning of 15 September. Japanese resistance at the beach was fierce. All three regiments had tough fights against a well-entrenched enemy. As the regiments pushed inland, they discovered that the Japanese were also defending in depth. Japanese soldiers used natural and improved caves in the coral and limestone of Peleliu as strongholds.[72] Virtually none of the Japanese surrendered, so the Marines had to eliminate each position one at time. Japanese resistance soon showed the fallacy of Rupertus' predictions about quick victory on Peleliu, and the fighting was some of the most savage of the war.[73] The land based bombers, carrier aircraft, and naval gunfire had failed to significantly reduce Japanese ground strength on the island.

Japanese air and naval strength in the Palaus, on the contrary, had been devastated. The absence of enemy air strength was verified on 15 September; no Japanese aircraft challenged the Peleliu landings. A single float plane conducted nightly attacks on the landing beaches from 18 to 26 September, but these attacks caused no

damage. The only effective enemy use of air power during the operation occurred when a Japanese airplane strafed a destroyer on the night of 1 October. Events proved that American air strikes had crushed Japanese air power in the Palaus before the landings occurred. The Japanese naval response was equally feeble. The Japanese Navy sent three submarines to attack American ships around the Palaus. The submarines recorded no success, and only one returned.[74]

Ships continued to provide gunfire support to the Marines during the battle, while escort carriers flew close air support missions from 15 to 28 September. Marine and Navy engineers began repairing Peleliu's airfield before combat forces had fully cleared the surrounding area of enemy soldiers. A Marine aircraft group flew to Peleliu as soon as the airfields were operating, and the Marines picked up all close air support missions after 28 September.[75] The Americans applied synergistic land, air and sea forces against Japanese land forces who were unsupported by their own air or sea forces.

The JCS directive had canceled Phase 2 of STALEMATE, but it had directed POA to seize Ulithi as Halsey had recommended; the forces scheduled to take Ulithi were now going to Leyte. On 16 September, Halsey ordered Wilkinson to capture Ulithi with a regimental combat team using the forces at his disposal. Wilkinson in turn tasked the III Amphibious Corps reserve, the 323d Regimental Combat Team of the 81st Infantry Division, to take Ulithi. By good fortune, this was the same regiment that had done preliminary planning in August for landing on Ulithi. After getting organized, the main body of the regiment left the Palaus on 21 September; initial

reconnaissance forces landed on Ulithi that same day. On 23 September, the main body of the regiment landed on islands throughout the atoll without incident. The regiment found no Japanese on any of the islands.[76]

With the information available in POA, Ulithi was an exceptionally good objective. The potential of the lagoon as a fleet anchorage and float plane base, and its potential for an airfield made it the most valuable atoll in the western Carolines. Additionally, intelligence estimated that the Japanese had only light defenses there. Still, Ulithi's inclusion during execution of the modified Operation STALEMATE caused problems. To take Ulithi, Wilkinson committed Geiger's corps reserve only one day after the Peleliu landings had begun. Later, as casualties wore down the 1st Marine Division, Geiger's lack of a corps reserve hampered his ability to relieve the hard pressed division. This exacerbated the division's already undesirable correlation of forces. The flexibility of POA to cancel a portion of the operation and execute the remainder with on hand forces had a cost. The cost of taking Ulithi was paid at Peleliu where cooks and clerks were pressed into service as riflemen because there was no reserve available.

The remainder of the 81st Infantry Division landed on Angaur. The plan left the landing date for Angaur to the discretion of Geiger and his Navy counterpart, Rear Admiral George H. Fort. The date was flexible so that the 81st could back up the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu if necessary. On 16 September, Geiger and Fort decided to land the 81st Division on Angaur the following day. The Marines were fighting hard on Peleliu, but Rupertus said that he did not need help

from the Army. Considering the fact that Rupertus had already committed both his division reserve and the division reconnaissance company to the fighting, his confidence seems misplaced. The 81st landed on 17 September, and after severe fighting had control of most of Angaur three days later. Japanese forces held out in a small pocket of rough terrain in the northwest corner of the island, however, and organized resistance did not end until 21 October. Air base construction began on 20 September, and the first airplane landed on Angaur on 15 October. Two 6,000 foot runways were completed on 19 October.[77]

By 21 September, the majority of the fighting on Angaur was over, but the 1st Marine Division needed reinforcements. The 1st Marine Regiment in particular had taken very high casualties. Geiger directed the 81st Division to detach one regiment to the Marines on Peleliu. The regiment loaded from Angaur and landed on Peleliu on 23 September.[78] American forces continued to push the Japanese defenders back. Like Angaur, the Peleliu defenders ended in a pocket, and the extremely rough terrain hindered its reduction. Organized resistance finally ended on 27 November 1944.[79]

Only a handful of the Japanese defenders on Peleliu surrendered. Most of them fought and held out as long as possible against the American attackers. Some even held out until after the war. Over two dozen Japanese emerged from hiding and surrendered in April 1947. While American air power could destroy Japanese air and sea forces in the Palaus, only American ground forces could defeat their ground forces. Bypassed ground forces, on the other hand, could not affect American operations. This was the situation in the northern

Palau Islands. At the end of the war, 24,877 Japanese Army and Navy personnel in these islands surrendered.[80]

Operation STALEMATE was costly in terms of casualties. Peleliu was the deadliest part of the operation. Marine casualties alone included 1,252 killed in action and 5,274 wounded in action.[81] Total losses in the operation for all services were 1,948 killed and 8,515 wounded for a total of over 10,000 casualties.[82] Disease and battle fatigue afflicted thousands more. The cost of the operation was high. What results did it provide the Pacific campaigns?

Operation STALEMATE guaranteed that the enemy could pose no threat to MacArthur's flank in the Philippines. The Japanese airfield on Peleliu was in American hands, and aircraft based there could easily hit the remaining Japanese airfields in the Palaus after a short flight. Any Japanese attempt to bring their aircraft to Babelthuap would have been futile. The Japanese air base on Yap was also within range of fighter escorted bombers from Peleliu. The Japanese could not have successfully rebuilt air strength there either. Still, the operation merely removed a slight residual risk. By the time of the landings, Japanese air power had been effectively eliminated, and Halsey knew it. Seizing Peleliu and Angaur was just insurance that the enemy could not regenerate air power in the Palaus.

American use of Peleliu and Angaur had little impact on subsequent operations. Five squadrons of aircraft occupied the airfield on Peleliu by the end of October. These squadrons had close air support aircraft and supported operations on Peleliu. Their airplanes were unable to reach the Philippines. The bomber base on Angaur eventually supported four squadrons composed of B-24 bombers.[83]

Unfortunately, engineers finished the base too late to support the invasion of Leyte. The main Leyte landings occurred on 20 October, and the first mission flown to the Philippines from Angaur did not occur until 17 November. Bombers from Angaur did eventually fly missions to the northern Philippines including Luzon.[84] The low value to American operations of these two air bases was predictable based upon the new line of operations and tempo. Bases in the Palaus were best against targets on Mindanao, but the operation on that island was canceled. The second best destination for Palaus based bombers was Leyte, but the accelerated tempo prevented the bases from being complete in time to help on Leyte. The bases had less value in the remainder of the Philippines, and bombers based in other places such as Morotai could reach those targets just as well. Did the other objectives of September 1944 have as little value as Peleliu and Angaur?

The Navy took Kossol Passage without using ground forces. While naval forces were securing the passage, Japanese mines sunk two mine sweepers, damaged one destroyer, and killed 7 sailors. The passage later served as a float plane base for air-sea rescue units and for three squadrons of long range search planes. Also, the passage served as an alternate fleet anchorage, but it was not safe in bad weather, so it had limited value. Only the low cost of securing the passage justified its minor importance.[85]

Ulithi, on the contrary, was very valuable. "This atoll became the hub of naval operations in the Western Pacific after September 1944."[86] Halsey used Ulithi to stage for the air strikes on Formosa that covered the Leyte operation. The resulting Formosa Air Battle

from 12 to 14 October resulted in 500 enemy aircraft destroyed at a cost of 79 friendly airplanes. Ulithi was the major naval staging base for operations on Luzon and Okinawa. The harbor could hold 700 ships, and before the fleet steamed for Okinawa, 617 ships were in Ulithi's harbor.[87]

The SWPA objective that complemented STALEMATE, Morotai, was also very useful as a staging base for the Leyte operation. In fact, it was the only air base that short range fighters could use to stage to Leyte.[88] Halsey's message recommended canceling this operation, and this would have been a serious mistake. Without an intermediate staging base, even P-47s could not have flown the one way distance from New Guinea to Leyte. Either the Palaus or Morotai could have served as an intermediate base. If the Palaus had been canceled, Morotai would have been mandatory.

The final STALEMATE objective was the one that was canceled, Yap. The Japanese air base there had no impact on the rest of the war, and the garrison there likewise had no influence on any American operations. The Japanese garrison there was nearly as big as the garrison on Peleliu. If Yap had not been canceled, American casualties there would likely have numbered in the thousands. Its location east of the Palaus would have made it even less valuable to operations in the Philippines than Peleliu and Angaur. Canceling Yap was undoubtedly a wise decision.

The acceleration of Leyte finally resolved the question of the future line of operations. MacArthur decided that the increased tempo allowed Luzon landings to move up by two months, and the Formosa operation could not be accelerated. Also, a Japanese offensive in

China had occupied large portions of China's coast making Formosa less useful for Japan's defeat. The JCS issued a decision in favor of Luzon on 3 October 1944.[89]

## Conclusions

Operation STALEMATE illustrates many of the concepts operational commanders should consider during the execution of a campaign plan. Line of operations, tempo, anticipation, synergy, risk, and flexibility are all current operational concepts, and they were all significant in this operation. The personalities of commanders also affected events, and cannot be ignored.

The operation showed that the line of operations throughout the campaign is an important concept for campaign execution. It shows how and where the force will accomplish the campaign's strategic objectives, so the line of operations must extend to the end point of the campaign. In the summer 1944, the JCS failed to select an end point for the twin campaigns in the Pacific. Nimitz and MacArthur did not definitely know where their campaigns were going, even though they had their own ideas concerning the proper end point. The JCS wanted to retain flexibility, but Nimitz did not even know the objective that would follow his next operation. The JCS failure to pick an end state deprived Nimitz of the ability to judge STALEMATE's significance. The operation itself accomplished no strategic objectives. It could only facilitate subsequent operations, but, other than SWPA's Mindanao operation, Nimitz did not know what these succeeding operations were. This experience indicates that planners should select a line of

operations through the depth of a campaign. This allows an objective analysis of the contribution of each operation to the overall campaign. Once the commander selects the principal line of operations, planners can ensure the plan has flexibility by writing branches and sequels. The original plan may not survive contact with the enemy, but an open ended campaign plan can lead to unnecessary operations like STALEMATE.

Tempo is a key basis for modifying or canceling a planned operation. Halsey saw an opportunity to dislocate the Japanese by accelerating tempo with a direct jump to Leyte. This acceleration resulted in the cancellation of the Talauds and Mindanao operations and the modification of STALEMATE. Altered tempo can also affect the relationship between parts of a campaign. Under the original tempo, the airfields on Angaur would have been finished well before the invasion of Leyte. With the acceleration, these airfields made no contribution to the Leyte landings.

Halsey clearly demonstrated anticipation during the September 1944 carrier strikes on the Philippines. His experience in the south Pacific allowed him to know what enemy signs indicated weakness. He looked for these signs and found what he was looking for. The recommendations that he based on these indicators were brilliant. Like Halsey, modern commanders should determine indicators that show that the enemy is stronger or weaker than predicted. Halsey's estimate also shows a danger in anticipation. The Japanese deceived Halsey by holding back most of their air strength. Halsey so expected to find Japanese weakness that he easily fell into the enemy's

deception plan. The line between astute anticipation and vulnerability to deception may be a fine one.

The synergistic application of joint forces presents the commander with many options. Operation STALEMATE applied sea and land based air power to neutralize Japanese air and sea power in the Palaus. It then applied sea, air and ground forces to destroy Japanese ground forces on Peleliu and Angaur. In this particular case, the Japanese ground forces were irrelevant to the rest of campaign. The operation's purpose could have been achieved without the costly use of American ground forces. Commanders should evaluate their options and choose the joint forces that accomplish an operation's purpose at least cost.

Commanders must judge the risk that is acceptable in their campaign. The risk to MacArthur's flank from Japanese forces in the Palaus was minimal, and Halsey recognized this. MacArthur wanted Nimitz to insure that this risk was eliminated, and American forces paid a high price for that insurance. Evaluating acceptable risk is a tough judgment call in each case. In retrospect, it seems MacArthur and Nimitz weighed risk incorrectly in this case.

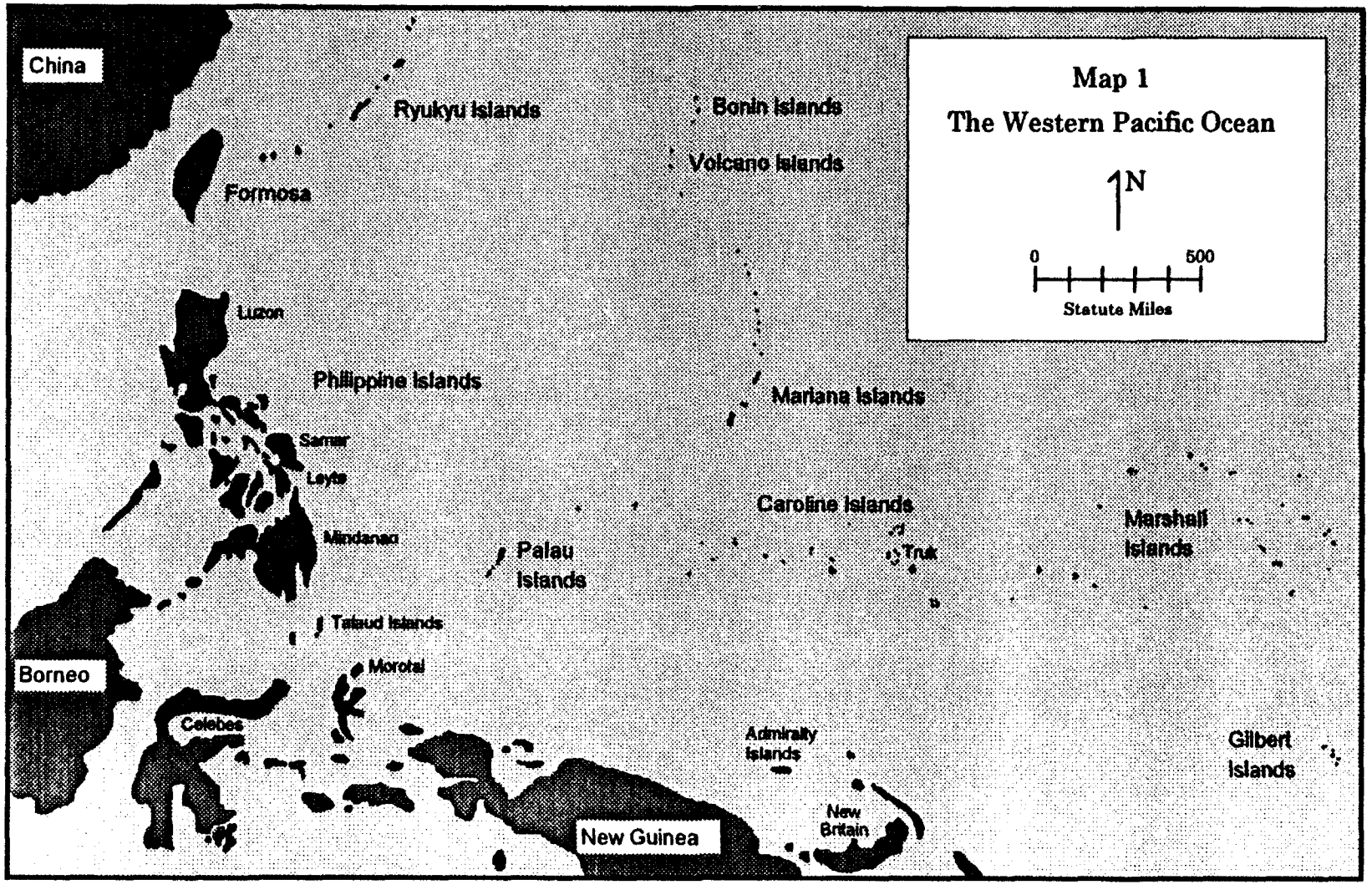
Two personalities stand out in Operation STALEMATE. Admiral Halsey seems dazzling: he correctly foresaw events, he had the resolution to send his recommendation to Nimitz, and he succeeded in canceling an unnecessary invasion of Yap. Nonetheless, Halsey was fallible. His estimate of Japanese strength on Leyte was wrong. In balance, Halsey was a strong, audacious commander with a great deal of experience. Nimitz was fortunate to have such a subordinate commander. General Rupertus seems dull: he predicted Peleliu would

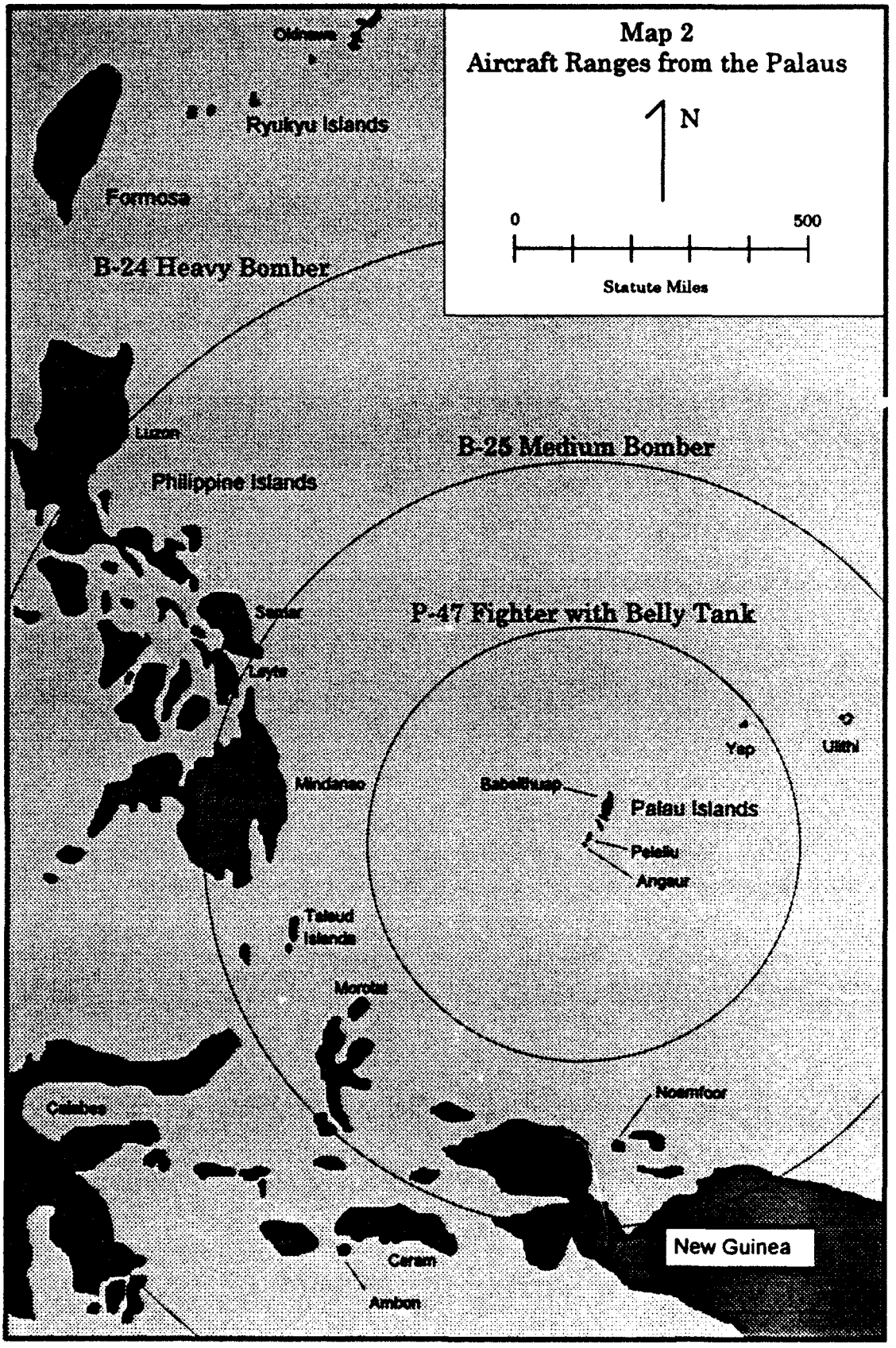
unfold as a short battle, he publicized this prediction to his division and to the press, and he did not want help from Army units. It appears that Rupertus used Tarawa as his model for Peleliu; it was the wrong model. The terrain and Japanese preparations on Peleliu made a quick battle such as Tarawa utterly impossible.

Ultimately, the landings on Peleliu and Angaur were pointless. The risk from the enemy's air power was so small that bypassing the islands was sensible. The Palaus were too far from Truk to contribute to that atoll's neutralization. The bypassing of Mindanao and the acceleration of the Leyte invasion made Angaur's air base irrelevant. Like Yap, Peleliu and Angaur should have been canceled. The eminent naval historian, Samuel Eliot Morison wrote, " . . . considering that the capture of Peleliu and the adjacent small island of Angaur cost almost as many American lives as the assault on Omaha Beach, it would seem that [Nimitz] here made one of his rare mistakes."[90]

Operational commanders must be flexible enough to change their campaign plans in midstream by modifying or canceling planned operations. Each operation needs reexamination before execution to determine if the situation has changed. The commander can expect refined information about the enemy and better knowledge about his own forces shortly before execution of an operation. He must determine if the operation still contributes toward victory, and evaluate whether its modification or cancellation would significantly increase the risk of defeat. He should also consider the impact of changes on the campaign's tempo. The commander may need to recover balance, and delaying the operation will slow the tempo. If accelerating tempo will unbalance the enemy, skipping the operation

may be appropriate. The commander must make these determinations based on a campaign planned in depth. An open ended campaign, without a defined end state, offers no basis for evaluating its component operations' contributions to the campaign. The commander can properly assess the operation only if it is part of a campaign with an identified end state.


China
Ryukyu Islands
Bonin Islands
Volcano Islands
Formosa
Map 1
The Western Pacific Ocean
N
0
500
Statute Miles
Luzon
Philippine Islands
Mariana Islands
Samar
Leyte
Caroline Islands
Marshall Islands
Mindanao
Palau Islands
Truk
Talaud Islands
Borneo
Morotai
Celebes
Admiralty Islands
Gilbert Islands
New Britain
New Guinea


Map 2
Aircraft Ranges from the Palaus
N
0
500
Statute Miles
Okinawa
Ryukyu Islands
Formosa
B-24 Heavy Bomber
Luzon
Philippine Islands
B-25 Medium Bomber
Samar
P-47 Fighter with Belly Tank
Leyte
Yap
Ulithi
Mindanao
Babelthuap
Palau Islands
Peleliu
Angaur
Talaud Islands
Morotai
Celebes
Noemfoor
New Guinea
Ceram
Ambon

## ENDNOTES

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3. Holborn, "The Prusso-German School," 289.

4. US Army, FM 100-5, Operations (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), p. 6-9. See also Joint Pub 3-0, pp. III-26 to III-27.

5. FM 100-5, p. 6-7 defines lines of operations as ". . . the directional orientation of the force in time and space in relation to the enemy." Joint Pub 3-0, p. III-22 uses exactly the same definition. Perhaps the clearest explanation of lines of operations is still Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, The Art of War (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1862; Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1992), 101. Jomini's ideas concerning lines of operations appear to be the basis for the current doctrinal definitions.

6. FM 100-5, pp. 6-9 and 7-2 to 7-3. Joint Pub 3-0 addresses the application of tempo in pages III-19 to III-20. The theoretical basis of tempo in current doctrine is found in Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 221-222. Clausewitz describes tension as the condition when both sides are struggling against each other. Rest is the condition seen during pauses or breaks in the action. Any action during tension has greater effects because of the greater pressure on the enemy, but action during periods of rest has relatively little impact. A strong force that can accelerate tempo shortens the periods of rest and increases pressure on the enemy. A weak force should try to slow tempo to build strength and to minimize the impact of setbacks.

7. Joint Pub 3-0, pp. III-16 to III-17.

8. Joint Pub 3-0, p. III-13.

9. George W. Garand and Truman R. Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, History of US Marine Corps Operations in World War II

Series (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1971), 63.

10. Ronald H. Spector, Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 144.

11. Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 277.

12. Michael R. Rampy, "Campaign Plan Formulation and the Deliberate Planning Process: Linking the Strategic and Operational Levels of War. Considerations and Implications for Strategic and Operational Level Planners" (AMSP Monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 20-21.

13. Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 256-257.

14. The actions that isolated Rabaul were code named Operation CARTWHEEL. Details of CARTWHEEL are shown in Thomas E. Griess, editor, Atlas for the Second World War: Asia and the Pacific, the West Point Military History Series (Wayne, New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group, 1985), maps 20 and 21. Subsequent operations in New Guinea are shown on maps 25 and 27. All major operations in the Pacific are shown on a single map sheet in William Graves, editor, "World War II: Asia and the Pacific." Map Supplement to National Geographic 180, no. 6 (December 1991).

15. Griess, ed., Atlas for the Second World War, maps 20 and 23-26.

16. Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 418-419.

17. Maurice Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944, The US Army in World War II Series (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), 193.

18. Louis Morton, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years, The US Army in World War II Series (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1962), 599-605; Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 376-377.

19. Robert Ross Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, The US Army in World War II Series (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), 6.

20. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 7-8; Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 455-456.

21. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 10-11; Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 457-459.

22. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 11-12; D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 2, 1941-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 393-394.

23. Frank O. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1950), 7-9.

24. Thomas B. Allen, "The Wings of War: How the Yanks of the Eighth Air Force Helped Turn the Tide in World War II," National Geographic 185, no. 3 (March 1994): 97.

25. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 454 describes the intelligence estimates. Information available after the war confirms the intelligence estimates as shown in United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), The Campaigns of the Pacific War (Washington, DC: United States Strategic Bombing Survey, 1946; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 273.

26. Frank Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," in The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, vol. 5 of The Army Air Forces in World War II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 275-304.

27. Allen, "The Wings of War," 97 portrays the ranges of several fighters and bombers. F. G. Swanborough, United States Military Aircraft Since 1909 (New York: Putnam, 1963) contains technical information on all American land based aircraft in World War II.

28. Harry A. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944 (Annapolis: Nautical and Aviation Publishing, 1983), 10-11. Another good account is Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 14-15.

29. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 60.

30. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 10-11.

31. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 16.

32. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 61.

33. E. B. Potter, Bull Halsey (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 272. Halsey explained his objections in his autobiography, William F. Halsey and J. Bryan III, Admiral Halsey's Story (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), 194-195.

34. James M. Merrill, A Sailor's Admiral: A Biography of William F. Halsey (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976), 136.

35. Samuel Eliot Morison, The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 338-345.

36. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 279.

37. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 61-62; Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 11.

38. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 464 describes the missions assigned to Halsey. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," provides the date of the operations order. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 11-12 explains the phasing of the operation.

39. Japanese strength estimates on Peleliu are from Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, The US Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 396. Strength estimates on Peleliu are also explained in Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 461-463. Strength estimates for Yap are from Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 69-70.

40. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 21-23 clearly develops the correlation of forces on Peleliu.

41. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 77-78. See also Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 15. Intelligence officers realized that their photographic interpreters were unable to detect many of the positions. A team of ground observers followed close behind Marines and soldiers on Peleliu to identify, sketch and photograph Japanese installations in order to compare them with aerial photographs taken before the assault. This helped photographic analysis in later operations.

42. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 64.

43. Isely and Crowl, The US Marines and Amphibious War, 398.

44. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 473; Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 83.

45. George McMillan, The Old Breed: A History of the First Marine Division in World War II (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), 269-270.

46. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 35.

47. The 81st Wildcat Division Historical Committee, The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division in World War II (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 47-50.

48. Samuel Eliot Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, vol. 12 of History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 8-10. Another interesting account of President Roosevelt's visit to Hawaii is in E. B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 315-320.

49. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 281-282.

50. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 283-284; James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 2, 1941-1945, 492.

51. M. Hamlin Cannon, Leyte: Return to the Philippines, The US Army in World War II Series (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 8.

52. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 288-295.

53. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 298-304.

54. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 101.

55. Potter, Bull Halsey, 275-276.

56. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, page 65 provides a summary of the raids. United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), The Campaigns of the Pacific War, pages 274-275 provides the estimates of the numbers of Japanese aircraft destroyed.

57. Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 13.

58. Halsey, Admiral Halsey's Story, 199.

59. Edmund G. Love, The Hourglass: A History of the 7th Infantry Division in World War II (Nashville: The Battery Press, 1988), 202-203.

60. According to Merrill, A Sailor's Admiral: A Biography of William F. Halsey, 135-136, Halsey's anticipation was brilliant despite his faulty intelligence estimate. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 307, presents a different conclusion from an air power perspective. According to Futrell, the plan Halsey developed could have succeeded only at extremely hazardous risks.

61. Potter, Bull Halsey, 277-278; Halsey, Admiral Halsey's Story, 198-200.

62. Potter, Bull Halsey, 277; Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 13; Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 190; Halsey, Admiral Halsey's Story, 200.

63. Nimitz' rationale for his response to Halsey's 13 September recommendation is not completely clear, and is the subject of some speculation. Potter, Nimitz, 323 emphasizes Nimitz' concern with supporting MacArthur. The timing problem is emphasized by Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 190 and by James H. Hallas, The Devil's Anvil: The Assault on Peleliu (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 31-32.

64. Douglas MacArthur, Reminiscences (New York: Da Capo, 1964), 211-212.

65. Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 14-15; Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 65; George C. Kenney, General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949), 432; James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 2, 1941-1945, 538. The date of SWPA's reply to the JCS is a source of considerable confusion. Morison put the date on 14 September, Garand and Strobridge put it on 15 September, and Kenney put it on 16 September. The confusion is authoritatively settled by Grace Person Hayes, The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 621. SWPA sent the message on 15 September from a western Pacific time zone. At that time, it was the evening of 14 September in Quebec, where the JCS received the message.

66. H. H. Arnold, Global Mission (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 527-528.

67. Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 15-16; Hayes, The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II, 621.

68. E. B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz, editors, Sea Power: A Naval History (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960), 772; Love, The Hourglass, 203-205; Orlando R. Davidson, J. Carl Willems, and Joseph A. Kahl, The Deadeyes: The Story of the 96th Infantry Division (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1947; Nashville: The Battery Press, 1981), 13.

69. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 496; Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 24; Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 102.

70. Isely and Crowl, The US Marines and Amphibious War, 403; Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 181; Bill D. Ross, Peleliu: Tragic Triumph (New York: Random House, 1991), 135-139.

71. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 495-496.

72. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 39-48 describes Japanese defenses on Peleliu.

73. Three excellent personal accounts portray the fighting on Peleliu. The accounts include all three of the 1st Marine Division's regiments. E. B. Sledge, With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) describes the fighting from the perspective of a young enlisted Marine in the 5th Marine Regiment. George P. Hunt, Coral Comes High (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946) gives the perspective of a company commander in the 1st Marine Regiment. Tom Lea, Peleliu Landing (El Paso: Carl Hertzog, 1945) explains events in the 7th Marine Regiment from the perspective of a war correspondent. This book includes Lea's keen pencil sketches of the action.

74. United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific), The Campaigns of the Pacific War, 275; Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 315; Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 39.

75. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 97-101.

76. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 108; Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 65-66 and 183-184.

77. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 499-530; Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 109-113; Ross, Peleliu: Tragic Triumph, 223-229.

78. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 535.

79. Gailey, Peleliu: 1944, 182.

80. Garand and Strobridge, Western Pacific Operations, 265.

81. Hough, The Assault on Peleliu, 183.

82. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 573 and 577.

83. Isely and Crowl, The US Marines and Amphibious War, 426-431.

84. Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 573-575.

85. Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 35 and 46.

86. Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 48.

87. Morison, The Two-Ocean War, 428-432; Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 50; Smith, The Approach to the Philippines, 575.

88. Futrell, "Prelude to Invasion," 311-315; Morison, Leyte: June 1944 - January 1945, 25.

89. Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 419-420; James, The Years of MacArthur, vol. 2, 1941-1945, 539.

90. Morison, The Two-Ocean War, 425.

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